

Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton
NEWSLETTER
January 2025 - THIS MONTH AND SUNDAYS



Sunday, January 5

9:30 a.m., Buddhist Meditation Sangha

Cathedral of the World

The Rev. James Galasinski

As we begin our bicentennial year we will take a look at the Rev. Forest Church's contribution to our contemporary understanding of Universalism. For him, reality is a huge cathedral, and we can only see through a few windows at a time. Then after will be special social hour with our New Year's bouillon tradition with celebratory bread and soup.
12:15 p.m., First Sunday Listening Circle

Tuesday, January 7

6:00 p.m., Soul Cards for Self-Reflection

Wednesday, January 8

8:00 a.m., Building & Grounds Committee

6:30 p.m., Church Council Meeting

Thursday, January 9

6:00 p.m., Second Thursday Listening Circle

Friday, January 10

12:30 p.m., Second Friday Listening Circle

5:00 p.m., Game Night

Saturday, January 11

6:00 p.m., UUs and D&D

Sunday, January 12

9:00 a.m., Choir Rehearsal

9:30 a.m., Buddhist Meditation Sangha

Inherent Mirth and Dignity

Liz James, Pulpit Guest

What do you do when the life you'd imagined for yourself is stuck in committee? Join us for the story of the UU Hysterical Society... The practical joke that accidentally turned into a 230,000 person UU community on Facebook. It's a story of feeling lost, finding yourself, and UUism-outside-the-box with UUHS founder.

Tuesday, January 14

9:30 a.m., Sacred Texts and Coffee

1:00 p.m., CommComm Meeting

7:00 p.m., Social Action Team Meeting

Thursday, January 16

6:00 p.m., Third Thursday Soup

7:00 p.m., Science Book Club

Sunday, January 19

9:00 a.m., History Circle

9:00 a.m., Choir Rehearsal

9:30 a.m., Buddhist Meditation Sangha

MLK and U.S. Presidents

The Rev. James Galasinski

Let's take a look at the relationship MLK had with past presidents. Even when he disagreed with them, how did he still court their power and use it to bend the arc of the moral universe?

Monday, January 20

7:00 p.m., Worship Committee Meeting

Tuesday, January 21

1:00 p.m., Membership & Outreach Team Meeting

6:30 p.m., Religious Education Committee Meeting

Friday, January 24

5:30 p.m., Together at the Table

Sunday, January 26

9:30 a.m., Buddhist Meditation Sangha

Smooth Stones of Liberal Religion

The Rev. James Galasinski

We will explore what makes our religious movement unique by looking at the UU theologian James Luther Adams. He says that one of our 5 foundational stones is that revelation is continuous. What is being revealed to us today?

11:30 a.m., Annual Congregational Budget Meeting

Monday, January 27

7:00 p.m., UU Men's Group

Tuesday, January 28

9:30 a.m., Sacred Texts and Coffee

SAY NO TO SCAMS!!! Churches across the country have become targets for scammers and hackers. If you receive emails that appear to be from a minister asking you to purchase gift cards, please "REPORT AS PHISHING" and delete the emails. **Our minister will NOT ask you to purchase gift cards, ever.** In fact, we don't know any minister or church leader that would make such a request. If you ever question an email you've received, please reach out to the office and inquire. We are happy to help.



JAMES' JOURNAL

The Bicentennial Year is Upon Us

First off, I want to express my gratitude for the successful pledge drive. Thank you to everyone that pledged, canvassed, and to everyone that planned and dreamed. We exceeded our goal! Wow! I am so proud to be the minister of this congregation. Our shared ministry is moving forward together.

This means we will not have a budget deficit, and we are in a great financial position to celebrate our bicentennial. 200 years of loving the hell out of this world. 200 years of peace and fellowship. 200 years of being a sanctuary for those that don't fit into simple theological boxes. 200 years of people committed to a more just world. We have some wonderful things planned for 2025, like special pulpit guests with deep connections to our congregation and some of the leading figures in Unitarian Universalism. We will learn about our past, revel in the power of the present, and continue to create our beloved community in the future.

In Peace,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "James Galasinski".

The Rev. James Galasinski



FAITH ENGAGEMENT

For the month of January our religious education program will focus on the shared value of Equity. By living into this value, we declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion, and we covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities.

We have a few special events happening in January to help us live into this value. Our older classes will be working to have a historical plaque installed for Olympia Brown in Malone. Families are invited to join us for the second **Together at the Table dinner on Friday, January 24 at 5:30p.m.** We will have a life-size puppet presentation, ***Kids on the Block***, with CP of the North Country on **Sunday, January 26** during religious education to help explain and answer questions children most often have regarding developmental and intellectual disabilities.

May we all find ways to live our UU shared values. May it be so.

Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Look for the first message from our new Church Council president, Cathy Crosby, in the February newsletter. She looks forward to sharing her thoughts in the president's column each month, but currently is still busy with her Worship Team commitments.

THANK UU



- Jessie Coffin, Suzu Coffin, Shep Coffin, Rev. James Galasinski, Miles Galasinski, Oskar Galasinski, Cathy Crosby, Mary Michalek, Rajiv Narula, Rohan Narula, Sofiya Boczarski, Evelyn Boczarski, Toby Sturges, Nate Sturges, and Todd Moe for being part of the holiday pageant.
- To Jon Montan, Stefan Grimberg, and Eden Terrell for their many collective years service on Church Council.
- To Cathy Crosby and Ed Gordon who said, “yes” to being on Church Council.
- To everyone who participated in and attended the Jazz and Coffee Night on December 13th. We had our biggest turnout with 90 folks soaking up the seasonal music, and we raised \$393 for the Church and Community Program in the process!

JOYS AND SORROWS

- ♥ Congratulations to Roger & Helen Hutchinson on the celebration of their 65th Wedding Anniversary in December!!
- ♥ Janice and Cliff Westerling will be joyfully celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on Saturday, the 28th of December.
- ♥ We continue to hold Cliff Westerling and Larissa Fawkner in our hearts as they receive ongoing cancer treatments.
- ♥ Eden Terrell and Kathy Wyckoff have come through their knee replacement surgeries well and wish them the best as they continue to heal and receive physical therapy.



UU BIRTHDAYS

If you're inclined to send a birthday card, addresses can be found in the [church directory online](#). If you'd like to *support* the [Caring Circle](#), fill out [this form](#) and join us in supporting members in a variety of ways! Email caringcircle@uucantonny.org to add any birthday names that are missing!

January 2	Carol Pynchon
January 6	Ellie Siegfried, Jean Williams-Bergen, Tobias Sturges
January 10	Karen Bage
January 11	Aryn Rivers
January 13	Zachary Barnes
January 18	Carol Opdyke, Louise Bixby
January 19	Kathy Montan
January 20	Duncan Cutter
January 24	Bobby Gordon
January 25	Diego Oey-Langen, Gwen Cunningham
January 27	Jenn Whittaker, Rohan Narula
January 29	Anne Marsh, Joan Kepes

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL BUDGET MEETING

The Annual Congregational Budge Meeting will be on **Sunday, January 26 directly after worship**. All are welcome but only members may vote on the proposed 2025 budget and an amendment to the church bylaws regarding the number of trustees we should have on church council. Church Council

proposes that we reduce the number of trustees from 6 to 5, in addition to the executive council, for a total of 9 Council members.

FROM THE WORSHIP TEAM

Starting in January I have the great privilege and huge responsibility of taking over as chair of the Worship Team. Cathy Crosby leaves very big shoes to fill, but I am excited for the opportunity. For those who don't know me, I have attended since 2014 and have served on various committees and teams, been a council trustee, and then secretary. Before moving here, I was a member of the 1st UU Society of Burlington for 10 years.

I love that UUs draw from many faith traditions. Worship varies week to week, which helps meet everyone's spiritual needs. My favorite services challenge me on an intellectual and moral level, but I appreciate that other people walk through our doors looking for something else. If you have ideas for the Worship Team or have comments about previous services, please feel free to reach out to me at worship@uucantonny.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

Mary Michalek, Worship Team Chair

Bicentennial Moments: On January 5th, we will begin our year-long celebration of our bicentennial! You will also hear the first "Bicentennial Moment", which we will use to mark the celebration each and every week. ***But we need your help!*** Please share with any member of the team ideas for or actual photos, short videos, show & tell, stories of our past, present, and future, or anything else that could be a bicentennial moment. You can also send your ideas to worship@uucantonny.org. We look forward to celebrating with you!

COME SING IN THE UU CHOIR for these Special Events!

Carol Strome and Paul Siskind invite you to sing with our UU Church Choir for special themed services and events throughout the year. The Choir rehearses from 9 -10 a.m. on the Sunday before and on the Sunday of the performance service.

To sign up to sing for any of these events, please e-mail Paul at paul@paulsiskind.com, and he'll add you to our choir info email list; please sign up 2-3 weeks ahead of the event date, so that Carol and Paul can select music that's appropriate for the roster. Thanks!

-January 19: MLK Day, featuring African-American music - Rehearsals: Sundays 1/12 & 1/19

-February 9: UU Church History, led by David Weissbard - Rehearsals: Sun 2/2 & 2/9

-Sunday, March 16 & Thursday, March 20: Nowruz Celebration (WiSPP) We'll be performing a Zikr, which is a Sufi devotional praise song. Rehearsals: Sundays 3/2, 3/9, and 3/16; with a performance again on Thursday 3/20 in the evening.

WORLD SPIRITUAL PRACTICES PROJECT (WiSPP) UPDATE

We've had a wonderful start to the World Spiritual Practices Project!

We began in the summer with a Sufi mystic [Rumi in the Garden Poetry Walk](#). In partnership with SLU's hosting of the Buddhist monks for the creation of the mandala of compassion, we hosted a [Buddhist Zen Garden Tour at SLU](#) and a [Winter Buddhist Tea Ceremony](#). We also created a weekly [Buddhist Meditation group](#) that now meets weekly on Sunday mornings and is open to all.

As part of the project, we hosted a [Pagan Mabon Service and Celebration](#) from the pulpit and the [Earth-centered Winter Solstice](#). We also hosted several [Core Shamanism Workshops](#) and created ongoing **Shamanic Circle Meet-ups** facilitated by Kim Bouchard.

There is more programming coming in the New Year! In January, we will host [Soul Cards \(Tarot and Oracle cards\) for Self-Reflection](#). In February, there will be a [Mindfulness Meditation Workshop](#) in the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition. This winter there will be several sessions of **Kripalu Yoga**, an **Introduction to the Spiritual Practice of Tai Chi**, and **Sound Healing with Tuning Forks and Healing Bowls**.

The project continues to deliver diverse spiritual UU experiences and perspectives to our congregation and community. In the new year, the WiSPP working group would like to hear ideas from you, our congregation members and friends. What spiritual experiences would you like to see incorporated into the World Spiritual Practices Project?

It could be a workshop, a celebration, a ceremony, a musical experience, a presentation, a poetry reading, or something else. The tradition can be Judaic, Hindu, Indigenous, Christian, Muslim, or another tradition. At the center, the experience should expand our understanding of the world religions and spiritual practices from which we UUs draw our wisdom and deep faith-based understanding of the universe. Please email your thoughts and ideas to communications@uucantonny.org.

-The WiSPP group (Rev. James, Carol, Larissa, Joya, Alison, Robin... and the other advisors who have offered their time, ideas, and energy.)

NEWS FROM THE MAX COOTS LIBRARY

Make 2025 the year you spend time with a book from the Max Coots Library. Starting in January, you will see a table in the social room during coffee hour displaying books from our collection. Grab a cup of coffee and wander over to browse or check out a book.

The library committee has been hard at work organizing the library and adding new books. Many of the most recent additions are kids' books. These include the picture book *Mira and The Big Story*, by Laura Alary, the photographic memoir *This is Your Time* by Ruby Bridges, a book of poems called *God Got a Dog* by Cynthia Rylant and *Sammy in the Sky* by Barbara Walsh – a children's story about the death of a beloved dog. This last title is part of our Memorial Collection in the corner of the library. We have also added *Gender and Sexuality for Beginners* by Jaimee Garbacik and *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Marlon Bundo to our growing collection of books on sexuality and gender. And finally, we have an intriguing picture book, *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis* and *The Children of Terezin*. Friedl was an art therapist and teacher who ended up at the Terezin concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. She helped children find hope through art. This book contains original artwork from her and the children at the camp.

If you are interested in learning more about what's in the library, or how you can help, contact me, Pat Perry, Linda Kenny, Arlene Oey or Louise Bixby. We are happy to share with you what we do. Wishing you time with a good book in 2025,

Lorraine Olendzenski, Library Committee Chair

2025 Common Read: As part of our Bicentennial and to celebrate African American History month everyone is invited to read Bryan Thompson's excellent book [African Americans of St. Lawrence County](#), which tells the stories of the many early Black people who made a home here. There are copies available in the Max Coots Library. Bryan, the author and longtime member of our congregation, will lead a discussion after church on **Sunday, February 9, 2025 in the Romer Room from noon until 1:30p.m.**

The 2024 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Japanese Organization Nihon Hidankyo for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again. In a recent newsletter, Arlene Oey reviewed the book *ONE SUNNY DAY* by Hideko Tumura Snider. The book describes the lifelong effects of the atomic bomb blast through her deeply personal and insightful story, and there is copy in our Coots Library. In addition to this, we have planted a cherry tree in the front yard of the church as part of the One Sunny Day Foundation's Peace Tree Initiative. We will hold a dedication ceremony in the spring.

FROM YOUR SOCIAL ACTION TEAM:

The Social Action Team invites all congregants to bring us your ideas for social justice issues, events, and projects with which our congregation might be interested in engaging. Please bring your ideas to the Social Action Team by e-mailing socialaction@uucantonny.org, or by attending our upcoming meeting on **Tuesday, January 21 at 7p.m.** via [Zoom](#). We will work with you to develop and implement your ideas.

Social Action Shared Offerings (SASOs):

About once a month, our congregation donates our Sunday offering to a worthy social service or social justice organization. We share information about the organization in the Order of Service and from the pulpit. This spring, we will be donating SASOs to the Second Chance Scholars Program, which provides support for formerly incarcerated people to complete a college degree (January 12); Angel Flight New England, which provides transportation for cancer patients to travel for treatments not available in their local area; and the Refugee Center in Utica, which provides services to new immigrants settling in the region. Suggestions for organizations to support with SASOs are welcome throughout the year; [use this link](#) to nominate an organization for a SASO:

Social Justice Initiative (SJI) planning:

It's time to start planning our next Social Justice Initiative. Our SJIs are a series of events held on a biennial(ish) basis, bringing together people from communities across the North Country to share information and resources to address issues of concern that we face. The topic for each SJI is decided collectively by our congregation. Previous SJIs have focused on Climate Justice and Underserved Communities, Mass Incarceration and Prison Reform, and Workplace Bullying. Our next SJI will be held in 2026, and we will begin planning for it starting this spring. We will solicit suggestions for the SJI topic via a congregational survey and meetings; keep an eye out for announcements about SJI planning and start thinking about potential topics that may be engaging for our congregation.

Medical Aid in Dying (MAiD):

We continue to support the campaign to pass the Medical Aid in Dying bill in New York. The legislation would allow a terminally ill adult the option to request, obtain, and ingest medication to die peacefully in their sleep if their suffering is unbearable; sometimes it's referred to as Death With Dignity. Only 10 states currently allow medical aid in dying to be available, and it is one of the priority issues for [NYUU Justice](#). An organization called [Compassion & Choices](#) organizes the legislative efforts, and they also offer valuable information and resources for individuals and families facing end-of-life decisions.

Last year, members of our congregation met with our State Legislators, attended rallies at the State Capitol, and wrote letters to elected officials. We plan to continue these efforts in the new year. We try to arrange for carpools and group housing for events at the capitol. [Click here](#) for information about upcoming MAiD events. There are Lobby Days at the State Capitol on [January 8](#) and [January 15](#).

If you would like to be on our e-mail list about MAiD events, please contact paul@paulsiskind.com.

WINTER POTLUCKS ARE COMING SOON

Winter potlucks are casual gatherings during the months of January, February, and March.

Here's how they work: A host family sets a date and time to host a meal at their home. They can be held after church, on a weekend evening, or some other time. Sometimes there might be a theme, like a book discussion or sledding activity. Sometimes the gathering is for adults only and others are for families. Guests sign up to attend and then communicate with the host to choose what to bring. If you are interested in HOSTING, please contact Jenn Whittaker at outreach@uucantonny.org, sign up on this [Google form](#), or look for a Host Sign-up in the Social Room.

If you are interested in being a GUEST, look for Potluck sign-ups in the Social Room very soon. Please consider hosting AND being a guest. This is a wonderful way to get through the winter months together.



BUDDHIST MEDITATION SANGHA

Our UU weekly meditation sangha is up and "sitting." We used to meet prior to the pandemic and have started back up again on **Sunday mornings at 9:30 a.m.** A few members and friends have been asking about our weekly meditation, so we wanted to share a little more information:

What is a meditation sangha? "Sangha" essentially means group. Similar to our UU covenant, which is our commitment to each other's spiritual practice, journey, and nourishment, the sangha is the Buddhist version of being in a harmonious assembly of practitioners who share a unified goal. Sangha is the people who follow the teachings of the Buddha. Laypeople, like us, are known as upāsaka (laymen) and upāsikā (laywomen).

The Sāvaka-Sangha, is the community of (noble) Buddhist disciples, and the Bhikkhu-Sangha are the monks and nuns that follow Buddha's teachings such as the monks that visited SLU to create the mandala of compassion.

The six practices of a Sangha include being physically present in one place, mindfulness, sharing discussion and nonverbal action and being present with views, insights, understanding and wisdom. Speech that is loving, calm, and gentle. Sharing material resources equally, and finally, a happy and joyful; synthesis of all ideas.

These practices are the foundation of the meditations and for many folks they align and intersect our UU values wholly and completely.

Is it okay to drop by on Sunday morning? Yes - you can drop by anytime!

Do I need advanced knowledge? No - there is no prior experience with meditation needed and

Do I need to attend weekly? No – there is no obligation to come every week.

Our hope is an engaged and active group. Each sitting is unique and in-the-moment. We don't only meditate. There are also readings, some chanting if you're interested, and we sit in silence letting the thoughts that often crowd our brains flow by. We sit in the present and allow ourselves a few moments to let go of the past and our worries about the future.

You are welcome and invited to sit on Sundays. Wear something comfortable and bring yourself as you are, with an open heart and mind.

-Tom and the UU Meditation Group

BICENTENNIAL KICKOFF CELEBRATION

Join us for the Bicentennial Kickoff Celebration on **Sunday, January 5!** The service, led by Rev. James Galasinski, will be *Cathedral of the World*. After the service, we'll celebrate with the traditional Bouillon Social Hour. There will be tomato soups and loaves of special bread made by the Earth-bound bakers. We'll have Bicentennial pins and lots of information about all the exciting upcoming events that will happen throughout the year, including our big culmination celebration in November 2025. For more information about the Bicentennial events, visit our [website](#). If you can help with set-up or clean-up, please fill out this quick [form](#).

SOUL CARDS FOR SELF-REFLECTION

On Tuesday, January 7 at 6 p.m., Kathy 'Kat' Wilcox, a Potsdam-based multi-modal holistic healing practitioner, will lead a workshop to explore how Soul Cards and other card decks can be used as a tool for personal growth, insight, and inner exploration.



Participants will learn how to do their own card spread to help identify the lessons, challenges, and accomplishments of the last year, and connect with intentions and aspirations for the new year ahead. There will be opportunities for each participant to read their own card spread and receive support and insights from other group members. The introduction to using cards for self-reflection will open opportunities to empower participants to make lifestyle changes that align with the goal of living one's life with compassion, kindness, acceptance, and love. If participants have their own card decks, they may bring them. Otherwise, there will be decks available for use during the workshop. The workshop is free, open to the public, and welcoming to all. Please register in advance [here](#).



GAME NIGHT

Join us on Friday, **January 10 at 5 p.m.** for an evening of board games! Bring your favorite game and friends or just come to join in! We'll meet in the social room and enjoy a relaxing evening of fun and fellowship. Want to stay up to date on all the game nights? Join the [private facebook group](#)! Contact [Carlene Bermann](#) if you have any questions.

UUs and D&D

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) has seen a resurgence in recent years due to appearances in pop culture and the pandemic. But, is it possible that Dungeons & Dragons can be more than just a game? Join us **Saturday, January 11th at 6 p.m.** in the Social Room for an introduction to D&D, character creation, and how RPG's (role playing games) can encourage storytelling, as well as cooperative team-building and critical thinking skills. We might even set off on a short adventure!

All ages are welcome, though younger bravehearts should bring an adult mentor. Let us know if you'll join us, so we can provide pizza and refreshments! Just email toddamoe@gmail.com.

THIRD THURSDAY SOUP

Come enjoy dinner with fellow UUs on **Thursday, January 16 at 6 p.m.** We will share a simple meal of soup and bread on the third Thursday of every month at 6 p.m. in the Social Room. Email outreach@uucantonny.org with questions or to sign up to make soup for any of the meals.

SCIENCE BOOK CLUB

In January, the Science Book Club is taking a fiction break. Barbara Kingsolver's novel, *Flight Behavior*, will be discussed at their Zoom meeting on **Thursday, January 16**. The group meets by Zoom at 7:00 pm. To sign up, contact Briangardam@gmail.com.

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION



On Saturday, February 1, 2025, 1 p.m. until 3 p.m., Jenna Joya Blondel will lead a two-hour workshop introducing the spiritual practices of meditation in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh, focusing on emotion regulation, stress response, memory, learning, and perspective-taking. Participants will learn breathing, walking, and eating meditation, and will have the opportunity to share experiences and ask questions. No prior meditation experience is needed, and there will not be a need to sit on the floor. This event is free and open to the public as part of the year-long World Spiritual Practices Project (WiSPP) grant from the Unitarian Universalist Association funding program (UUFPP). Advance registration is appreciated. You can register online [here](#).

ANNUAL UU CHILI FEST

When the temps drop, our Chili Fest rises to the top!

*We don't give a dilly,
about being silly
when it comes to making chili.
If you don't either,
then take a breather.
Make a pot.
Doesn't have to be a lot.
Or, share a bowl
with us all!
Be a dear
and join us here --
for the 2025 UU Canton Chili Fest
February 16th during Social Hour!*



Staff Schedules for the Church Year:

The Rev. James Galasinski: Available [by email](#) and by appointment **Monday – Thursday**
Carol Zimmerman, DRE: Available [by email](#) **Sunday–Thursday** and
by appointment on **Tuesdays & Wednesdays.**
Sara Trimm, Administrator: Available [by email](#) **Monday – Thursday** and
in the office Tuesday & Thursday from 9a.m. – 2p.m.

The church office is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9a.m. until 2p.m.
You can always check [the calendar on our website](#) for details.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

Creating a welcoming, compassionate faith community,
committed to social justice and open to wonder.

Together we strive to:

- Foster a spirit of inclusion and connection
- Encourage exploration of truth and meaning
- Nurture respect for all life and the environment
- Live our values in the North Country and in the wider world

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton

The Rev. James Galasinski, Minister
Carol Zimmerman, Director of Religious Education
Sara Trimm, Congregational Administrator
Betsy Kepes, Music Coordinator
The Revs. Anne Marsh and Wade Wheelock, Ministers Emeriti
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